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NEWS RELEASE

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Embargo until: Tuesday, November 1, 2011 @ 11 a.m.

Nation's Report Card: R.I. Students At, Above National Average on All Tests Scores Up in Grade 4 and Grade 8 Mathematics, Grade 8 Reading

For the first time in the history of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), sometimes called “The Nation’s Report Card,” Rhode Island students scored at or above the national average on all four mathematics and reading tests.

Results that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released today (November 1, 2011) show that Rhode Island students in grade 4 scored above the national average in both mathematics and reading. Rhode Island students in grade 8 scored at the national average in mathematics and above the national average in reading.

Rhode Island was one of only 3 states (plus the District of Columbia) to improve in both grade-4 and grade-8 mathematics, and Rhode Island is the *only* state (plus the District of Columbia) to improve in both mathematics assessments on the previous (2009) and the current Report Card.

This year, 34 percent of Rhode Island 8th-graders were proficient in mathematics, an increase of 6 percentage points. In grade 4, 43 percent of Rhode Island students were proficient in mathematics this year, an increase of 4 percentage points.

“For the first time since the NAEP assessments began, more than 20 years ago, Rhode Island students have met or surpassed the national average in all reading and mathematics tests,” said Governor Lincoln D. Chafee. “This is great news for our state, and it shows that our schools are moving in the right direction and advancing student achievement across the board. I congratulate all of our students, teachers, and administrators who have made all Rhode Islanders proud of their achievement.”

Reading results released today show that 35 percent of Rhode Island 4th-graders were proficient, a drop of 1 percentage point – but still higher than the national average. In grade-8 reading, 33 percent of Rhode Island students were proficient, an increase of 5 percentage points.

“I am very pleased at the progress our students have made on the NAEP assessments, particularly the strong gains in mathematics over the past four years,” said George D. Caruolo, Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “Today’s results show that our strategic investments in developing curriculum, improving instruction, and ensuring educator excellence will benefit our students and our state for years to come.”

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Among the 52 states and jurisdictions, Rhode Island ranked 23rd in grade-4 mathematics, 21st in grade-4 reading, and 30th in grade 8 (in both mathematics and reading). Each ranking is an improvement over the 2009 results.

Achievement gaps remain a significant problem in Rhode Island, with black and Hispanic students, students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and English-language learners scoring below state averages on all four assessments.

Some student groups did make significant progress in the percent who achieved proficiency, however, particularly in mathematics, including a gain of 6 percentage points for students in poverty in grade 4, a gain of 4 percentage points for students in poverty in grade 8, and a gain of 5 percentage points for Hispanic students in grade 8.

Hispanic students in Rhode Island are no longer the lowest-scoring in the country, as they were in 2009.

“All Rhode Islanders should be proud of the progress our students have made in mathematics and reading over the past four years,” said Deborah A Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Until this year, our mathematics scores have never been above the national average, and our grade-8 reading scores have been below the national average since 2007. While I remain concerned about our achievement gaps, I am confident that we are on the right path and that, with excellent teachers in every classroom and excellent leaders in every school, we can close these achievement gaps and prepare all of our students for success.”

A selected sample of 4th-grade and 8th-grade students (about 11,800) from across the state took the NAEP mathematics and reading tests from January through March of 2011. NCES releases statewide results for grades 4 and 8 only; it releases no results at the school or district level.

The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) will post further information on the Rhode Island NAEP scores on the RIDE Web site:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/Office_IAC.aspx.

The NCES has posted information about the NAEP reading results on its site:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>

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